

The sisters were taught they had “for monastery only the houses of the sick, ... for cell a rented room, chapel their parish church, for cloister the streets of the city....”



The Daughters were the only community of women in France at that time to work outside the walls of a cloister—they were radically engaged with the world. Louise and a few sisters made vows to give themselves to God in community to serve poor persons. From 5 or 6 sisters in 1633, they grew to 12 by July 1634 and around 20 at the beginning of 1636. On 25 March 1642 the Mother House of the Daughters moved to Saint-Denis district of Paris, closer to Saint Lazare. In 1643 Louise began using the seal of the Company: the image of Christ crucified with the words “The Charity of Jesus crucified urges us.” (The words are from St. Paul)



On 20 November 1646 the Coadjutor Archbishop of Paris, Jean-François de Gondi, granted his Act of Approbation to the Company. The document placed the Company under the authority of the archbishop of Paris and his successors, not under Vincent de Paul and his successors as Louise requested.

Christ is the Rule of the Daughters of Charity



In 1647 Vincent offered the Rules for their community life to the Daughters. This rule was substantially the Draft Rule composed by Louise with his help.

In 1650 Michele-Antoine married Gabrielle Le Clerc. Vincent witnessed the marriage.

In early 1651 Louise-Renée was born to Michele-Antoine and Gabrielle, Louise’s only grandchild

In 1652 the Daughters were sent to Poland, their first mission beyond France.

On 18 January 1655 formal approval of the Rules for the Company was given by Cardinal de Retz, Archbishop of Paris which confided its government and direction to the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission.

On 15 March 1660 Louise died. On 8 July 1668 papal approval of the Daughters was issued by Cardinal Louis de Bourbon, personal legate of Pope Clement IX. He approved the statutes of 1655 and affirmed the role of the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission.

Louise de Marillac was beatified on 9 May 1920 and canonized a saint in 1934. On 15 March 1960 Louise was declared patron of works of charity by Pope John XXIII. 27Aug 2014



## The Life of St. Louise de Marillac

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St. Louise was born in 1591 on 12 August. Her father was Louis de Marillac; her mother is unknown. The de Marillac family came originally from the Haute-Auvergne region of France, where the family owned a castle or stronghold near the town of Mauriac. As a preschooler she was sent to the Dominican convent school in Poissy, about 6 miles from Paris, remaining there about 12 years. Her great aunt was a Dominican nun at this convent. She received a classical education which may have included Latin, philosophy, theology, liturgy, painting, music, spirituality of the mystics, and meditation.

As a young adolescent Louise was then placed in a boarding house similar to a finishing school. Her father Louis de Marillac died on 25 July 1604. Afterwards her uncle, Michel de Marillac became her guardian. She received 300 pounds compensation from her father's will. In the same year she asked permission to enter the Daughters of the Passion cloister (Capuchins) but was denied because of ill health; she went to live with her paternal aunt Valence d'Atticy.

On 5 February 1613 she married Antoine Le Gras, a secretary to Marie de Medicis, in the church of St. Gervais. Their son Michel-Antoine was born prematurely on 18 October. In the same year Monsieur Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley, became her spiritual director. Around 1621-22 Antoine's health began to deteriorate, possibly from tuberculosis. During this time Louise fell into a state of depression as she struggled to deal with his mood swings and her feelings of being deserted by God. Around this time Louise made a promise to God that she would not remarry if Antoine died. During Mass, on 4 June the feast of Pentecost, in the church of St. Nicolas-des-Champs, she received consolation (lumière) that cleared her of her doubts. Antoine died 21 December 1625. The family was left with limited financial resources.

Louise retained the title "Mademoiselle." In 1625



Bishop Camus, whose house was far from Paris, appointed Vincent de Paul to be her spiritual director, a position which he reluctantly took; likewise she found him "repugnant" at first—she was not immediately impressed by this peasant priest.

Around 1627 her son Michel-Antoine was placed as a boarder at the seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet but he did not do well in his studies. Louise hoped he would become a priest. Vincent de Paul befriended the boy and welcomed him at Saint Lazare, the headquarters of the Vincentian Fathers and Brothers, when it was obvious that he had no vocation to the priesthood. During this time Louise was involved in several charitable activities initiated by Vincent, particularly the Confraternity of Charity at her parish

In 1629 Vincent sent Louise to Montmirail. Prior to this Vincent had Louise prepare clothing for the poor and had it sent to the different parish-based outreach programs. She also visited the poor in her own parish. Vincent grew to trust her judgment and she grew in self-confidence. This trip to Montmirail began their collaboration with each other. Louise began to visit all the Confraternities of Charity; she was the official visitor sent by Vincent to monitor how well the confraternities carried out their mission to the sick poor. A teamwork and friendship developed between them.



In 1630, during a parish mission, Marguerite Naseau told Vincent de Paul that she wanted to serve the poor. She was a peasant woman about 32 years old. He sent Marguerite to Louise who had Marguerite work with the Ladies of Charity; her spirit was contagious and soon other women came to join as well. Initially these young women lived in the parishes and worked in the charities established there and were called *filles* or "servants" of the Charity. In 1630 Louise first presented to Vincent the idea of forming these women into a community. In Vincent's day any woman who wanted to serve God had to go to a cloister and they also needed dowries.



About 1631 a rumor was started that Louise had promised to marry someone. There was no truth to the rumor but it deeply hurt Louise. Vincent's famous response to her struggle was "*J'ai peine de votre peine.*" (I suffer when you suffer)

In 1633 Marguerite Naseau took a poor sick woman home but contracted the plague from her and died in February. In August Vincent went on retreat to discern whether to join the women together to form them in the spirituality of service to the poor. Vincent discerned that Louise's request to do so was from God. On 29 November Louise welcomed into her home on the rue des fossés Saint Victor 5 or 6 women who came together to live in community, in order to serve poor persons in need. The Daughters of Charity were born. Louise taught them how to read and write, the catechism and Gospel values as well as skills needed for their service. Initially Vincent did not want to be their superior but Louise feared having the local bishop take over the community. After some pressure, Vincent consented.